Anglo-Latin and Old English: A Case for Integrated Bilingual Corpus Studies of Anglo-Saxon Registers

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Abstract

This article describes Anglo-Latin and Old English as two codes correlated in Anglo-Saxon England with the same cultural elite. Introducing a taxonomy of Anglo-Saxon registers, it claims that Anglo-Latin material can supplement our knowledge of early Old English lexis. A corpus of *Medieval Latin from Anglo-Saxon Sources* is advocated as a new electronic resource to facilitate bilingual studies in this field.

The interface between Latin and Old English (OE) in the insular period has been traditionally described in terms of language contact, or rather it has been tacitly assumed that such terms or phrases as "Latin influence", "Latin borrowings", etc. can be safely used to describe this situation. Although there seems to be little doubt that these are valid terms, it is striking that what historians of Old English take for granted in their field is clearly at odds with how, say, contact-induced change or bilingualism are understood in contact linguistics (for example in Thomason/Kaufman 1988, or Heine/Kuteva 2005), but see also the discussion of the discrepancy and suggestions for alternative terminology in Timofeeva (2010a,b; 2011). The problematic aspects of the functioning of Latin in Anglo-Saxon England are twofold. On the one hand, there is a controversy (too often ideologically charged in our postcolonial world) over the survival of British Latin – the extent to which it penetrated the various classes of Romanized Celtic society, the upper time limit of its last vestiges, and the geographical distribution of its speakers before and after the Anglo-Saxon settlement (see Jackson 1953: 94-121; Gratwick 1982: 2-6, 69-71; Wollman 1993: 8-15; Wright 2002: 4; Schrijver 2002, 2007 and Tristram 2004: 94-99, etc.). All these make it difficult and often impossible to estimate the circumstances and effects of 'normal' everyday language contact between speakers of British Latin and English.

On the other hand, there is another contact situation between 'high' Latin and Old English among the educated Anglo-Saxons. It is with this second language setting that most studies of the Latin lexical and syntactic influence on OE are

concerned (see selected references in Timofeeva 2006: 48-51; 2010b: 19-22, 78-84, 185). Although they give us valuable insights into development of certain areas of lexis or certain domains of syntax, their authors tend to be somewhat vague as to the sociolinguistic environment of the 'loans' or 'influences' that they discuss, which are generally listed as types of loans (see for example van Gelderen 2006: 93-95). Except for Latin being notoriously (and perhaps too uncritically) referred to as 'the language of the church and administration', we find very little discussion – with the notable exception of Fischer (1992) – of how exactly Latin functioned in Anglo-Saxon society, and whether loans and influences could take place at all in this setting. Moreover, Latin-Old English interaction is typically presented from the point of view of what OE gets from Latin and not of what it gives back. Thus the picture that we have at present lacks both background and dimension. In what follows I would like to suggest that the Latin and English produced by the Anglo-Saxons might be seen as two codes correlated with the same cultural elite. With Latin being the highest among the Anglo-Saxon registers, I defend the idea of integrated bilingual corpus studies of these registers, and introduce my Anglo-Latin corpus project as a first step in this direction.

To begin with, let us briefly consider the interaction between 'high' Latin and Old English from the language-contact position. Three features of the Anglo-Latin bilingualism should be highlighted, namely that it is distant, written, and socially restricted (see Wright 2002: 11-17). Such settings are not universally recognised as legitimate cases of bilingualism (see Thomason/Kaufman 1988: 66-67). Loveday (1996), however, allows for *distant but institutional* bilingualism,[1] in which the speech community as a whole is typically monolingual, and the second-language acquisition is often related to political and cultural dominance. In the OE period, direct contact with native speakers of late Latin-early Romance will have been very rare among the Anglo-Saxons, although within Latin-based institutions (school and church), the intensity of exposure to Latin must have been very high. With a lack of oral exchange with native speakers, written competence in Latin prevails over oral competence. Its acquisition and use are socially restricted to clerical strata, and advanced second-language proficiency is widespread only among the higher secular clergy (i.e. bishops and cathedral priests) and regular clergy (monks and nuns, see

[1] "[T]his kind of contact takes place when the acquisition of a foreign language is not part of community activities, unless in the domain of religion, but is promoted through an institution such as school" (Loveday 1996: 19-20).

Timofeeva 2010a: 1-2, 9-16; 2010b: 8-11). What is also rather unfavourable for the linguistic implications of Latin-Old English language contact is that the size of this bilingual group is well below one per cent of the total population.[2] All this allows us not only to envisage how small the number of people who used Latin was, but also to understand that our knowledge of OE is essentially limited to the language of an extremely small community (see Tristram 2004: 103-105). Since literacy in OE typically presupposes literacy in Latin, that is, any formal schooling is inevitably Latin schooling, in the course of which one can also acquire an ability to read and write OE,[3] it follows that written Latin and written OE are produced and consumed by more or less the same group of people, the professional ecclesiastical minority.[4]

This fact was recognised by philologists at least forty years ago (Bolton 1971) and articulated most eloquently by Lapidge (1993 [1991]: 1-2, n. 1):

> [W]e should always remember that works in Latin and the vernacular were copied together in Anglo-Saxon scriptoria, and were arguably composed together in Anglo-Saxon schools. What is needed, therefore, is an integrated literary history which treats Latin and vernacular production together as two facets of one culture, not as isolated phenomena.

Although a lot has been done to integrate the two literatures,[5] the languages in which they are written continue to be held apart. I would, therefore, like to encourage linguists to consider a possibility of an integrated language history

[2] It is indeed possible to get a rough estimate of how many people knew Latin in the OE period. Given that the clergy is the only group that is likely to be educated in Latin, the estimate of the number of clerics would yield us a figure that would come close to the size of the bilingual group. I have based my calculation on the *Domesday Book* of 1086. The total population in 1086 is estimated to be between 1,100,000 and 2,250,000 people (Russell 1944, 1948; Miller/Hatcher 1978; Hinde 2003). The estimate of the size of the clergy (based on the number of bishoprics, cathedrals, monasteries, and the average number of clerics associated with them) is about 5,500 people (for more details on this calculation, see Timofeeva 2010a: 12-16). Thus, if we divide this figure by the total population, we get between 0.5 and 0.25 per cent, cf. Tristram (2004: 105).

[3] King Alfred's educational plans provided for the reverse acquisition of literacy among free young men in England: the ability to read English first, followed by further instruction in Latin (CPLetWærf 49; cf. Asser, ch. 102), but we do not know whether or how widely this practice extended beyond his palace school (Lapidge 1993 [1991]: 5-12). Ælfric's *Grammar* of c. 1000 is another notable exception (Bullough 1991: 314-317).

[4] Cf. Wormald's conclusions concerning the "restricted literacy" of the Anglo-Saxon period (1977: 113).

[5] See, for example, Pulsiano/Treharne (2001), which brings together articles on Anglo-Latin and Old English literary practices under one title, eloquently phrased *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*.

which treats Latin and the vernacular together as two facets of one language. Typologically speaking, the two languages of course remain separate, even though examples of various types of code mixing are not too hard to find (see Schendl 2004, Timofeeva 2010a, etc.). My concern, however, is not with typology, but with the taxonomy of registers in Latin-vernacular diglossia. Because both Anglo-Latin and written OE are determined by user characteristics such as religion, class and social power, this diglossia can be best described as *user-oriented*. In Anglo-Saxon England, Latin 'high' (and in due time OE 'high' too) is "superposed acquisitionally and functionally only for a portion of the community" (Britto 1986: 35-53, 331-332) and remains nobody's native language, but one that is only acquired through schooling, and is correlated with its users as the language of the cultural elite.

Let me illustrate the 'one-language' approach with a case study of the notion of 'Latin' in Anglo-Latin and Old English.[6] A diachronic corpus study consisting of two sets of data: Anglo-Latin texts written between the 670s and 800s (based on a selection from *Library of Latin Texts*, Series A in Brepolis databases), and Old English texts written for the most part between the 850s and 1050s (based on a selection from *DOEC*) reveals that the development of vocabulary connected with Latin language and culture shows a clear continuity from Anglo-Latin to OE (see Tables 1 and 2). The main conceptual associations between 'Latin' and 'language', 'literacy', 'education', 'books', 'translation', etc. are first transferred to and formulated in Anglo-Latin from continental Latin, and with the emergence of the vernacular written tradition, they are later re-encoded in OE, with necessary adjustments being made so as to fit these words and phrases to OE morphology.

[6] Described in detail in Timofeeva (forthc.). On language ideologies and attitudes towards 'Latin' in Antiquity, see Fögen (2003); on 'Latin' in the Middle Ages, see Wright (1982, 1991, 2002), Janson (1991), van Uytfanghe (1991), etc. A detailed survey of secondary literature on the term *Latinus* is available in Kramer (1998: 11-57).

called/named/means in Latin	69
in Latin (adverb)	44
translate into Latin	31
Latins as a people	29
Latin language	29
Latin word/book/letter	20
apud Latinos	16
called by the *Latini*	6
'Latin' in context with Romans	4
Latin tradition	4
Latin etymology	3
Latin nouns	2
Latin eloquence	2
correct Latin	1
language of the *Latini*	1
X is Latin	1
Latin authors	1
Latin libraries	1
forest of Latinity	1
Total	**265**

call/mean in Latin	133
write in Latin	16
understand/know Latin	16
Latin books	10
translate from Latin	8
Latins as a people (*Lædenware*)	7
translate into Latin	6
Latin grammar	4
study Latin	3
learned/educated in Latin	2
Latin word	2
speak Latin	1
knowledge of Latin	1
avoid barbarisms in Latin	1
Latin computus	1
mix English and Latin	1
Total	**212**

Table 1 (left): Contexts and collocates of "Latin" and "Latinity" in Anglo-Latin
Table 2 (right): Contexts and collocates of "Latin" and "Latinity" in OE

All the collocations that are present in Anglo-Latin also find their way into OE. Later on, however, as *læden* words are being assimilated in OE, new compounds begin to emerge.[7] In other words these concepts and vocabulary are first adopted by the high written register of the Anglo-Saxons (before the 800s it is Latin by default) and are then infiltrated into their lower written register, OE. Thus, I suggest that the Anglo-Latin data can be used as a supplement primarily to the meagre contents of the OE1 period (dated to before 850 in the *Helsinki Corpus*)[8] and to other periods of OE. Studies based on these two sets

[7] E.g., OE develops three compounds to denote the "Latin-language": *læden-spræc*, *læden-geþeode*, and *læden-gereord*. Two more compounds are *læden-boc* "Latin book" and *boc-læden* "book Latin; written language". The conceptual proximity of 'Latin' and written culture continues to be emphasized in these compounds.

[8] The complete word count for OE1 is 2,190 words. These include a few early charters, *Cædmon's Hymn*, *Bede's Death Song*, the *Ruthwell Cross*, and the *Leiden Riddle* (Kahlas-Tarkka/Kilpiö/Österman 1993: 21-24).

of data can also help us trace the paths of lexical borrowing and assimilation of loans.

What has to be borne in mind, though, is that these studies will continue to describe the two written registers of the educated elite. Tristram (2004) has suggested that the written and spoken English language of the Anglo-Saxon elite was kept comparatively constant throughout the OE period and continued to be cultivated for about two generations following the Norman Conquest. "[T]he vernacular of the bulk of the population" was markedly different from this OE standard. It was, therefore, "the *spoken* language of the formerly repressed low variety" with its substrata of Celtic and Scandinavian that "surfaced after the replacement of the Anglo-Saxon elite by William the Conqueror" and later on gave rise to "a strongly regionalized middle class *written* language" (Tristram 2004: 103-104 – italics in the original). While Tristram's tripartite diglossia model – OE high written, OE high spoken, and OE low spoken – is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to our understanding of the abrupt changes of the early Middle English period, I suggest that a fuller picture may emerge if we envisage the language situation of OE period as still more layered and dynamic:

> **Latin high** is a formal written register, documented between about twelve and twenty times better than the surviving OE (Bolton 1971: 151-152). It was used chiefly by the clergy, whose proficiency in Latin varied greatly depending on time period, possibly location, and, above all, social status.
>
> **OE low 1 → OE high 1** is a formal written register, well documented and used chiefly by the clergy and a few educated laymen. Starting out as a West-Saxon courtly norm of the late ninth century (OE low 1), it gradually developed towards a second written standard (OE high 1), competing with and eventually replacing other existing written norms (Mercian and Northumbrian). This standard continued to be maintained well into the twelfth century.
>
> **OE low 2 → OE high 2** is a less formal spoken variety of the above. It is undocumented and was used, again, by the Anglo-Saxon powerful elite.
>
> **OE low 3** is an informal spoken register, undocumented, used by the lower classes with diverse ethnic/linguistic backgrounds: Celtic, British Latin, and Scandinavian (see Tristram 2004: 103-105).

While spoken OE will largely remain a matter of scholarly speculation, the interfaces between the written registers can be understood more fully if comparative studies of Anglo-Latin and OE (as the one outlined above) are extended to later Anglo-Latin, and set against the context of other vernaculars

and other varieties of Latin. In terms of English historical lexis, there is clearly a lot to be gained from such diachronic multilingual investigations, with concepts connected with local insular culture providing perhaps an obvious point of departure for future studies. Our understanding of Latin-Old English language contact will benefit greatly if the reverse influence, that of first-language OE speakers upon Anglo-Latin, is considered. A sound classification of text-types for both written registers is another important desideratum.

Having outlined the problems and prospects of Latin-Old English linguistic studies, I would like to conclude this paper by introducing a tool that will hopefully help to address both. This tool is a corpus of *Medieval Latin from Anglo-Saxon Sources*. This project was started at the Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English, University of Helsinki, in 2009, and is presently being continued at the English department of the University of Zurich. Our aim is to compile a corpus of Latin texts from ca. 690-1150 A.D., written by authors with L1 English (or exceptionally L2 English). Ideally the corpus should be compatible with other corpora of medieval Latin from British and continental sources, accessible to and usable by a wide audience of scholars working in medieval history, culture, and language. It will have an appropriate level of metadata and annotation, and provide free and open access to several millions of words.

As an electronic reality today the corpus includes the *Anglo-Latin Minor Poetry sub-corpus* of 38,329 words (as of 14 February 2012), with division into Metrical and Rhythmical parts and division into types of poetry within each part. The files have basic metadata: author, date, place, genre, manuscript, edition, metrical analysis, etc. The prose extension was started in spring 2011 and has grown today to about 176,000 words (as of 14 February 2012). Both parts are searchable with WordSmith and will go through an XML conversion in the near future. Apart from the funding institutions mentioned above, the steady progress of the project has been greatly facilitated by the generous support of Michael Lapidge, who donated his collection of Anglo-Latin verse and prose (in manuscripts, photocopies and electronic files) to the corpus, David Howlett, Antonette diPaolo Healey, and Matti Kilpiö, the careful work of Anne Gardner, Alpo Honkapohja, and Sergey Zavyalov, and the proofreading tenacity of five student assistants: Viviane Bergmaier, Lucas Orellano, Irene Rettig, Dominique Stehli, and Eva Stempelova.

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